

OPEN MEETING AGENDA ITEM

Natural gas fuels Arizona economy, commissioners should ignore out-of-state naysayers

Danny Seiden
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Arizona's ability to ensure that job creators have access to safe, reliable, low-carbon natural gas is crucial to our state's competitive advantage over other states. I talk to employers all the time who are looking at Arizona to invest and grow, and our capacity to deliver a variety of affordable energy sources gives Arizona a leg up.

But the importance of natural gas to the Arizona economy is a fact that Southwest Gas' [critics](#) either ignore or deny. There's a predictable narrative that comes from out-of-state activist groups that are more interested in advancing an agenda untethered from the realities of today's economy than they are in ensuring affordable energy rates for Arizona consumers.

Next week, the Arizona Corporation Commission can set the record straight and stand up for customers across the state by approving the rate case filed by Southwest Gas in 2021. Commissioners, including the ACC's two newest members, will hold an open meeting to consider the findings of an administrative law judge in the case. On behalf of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry, I strongly encourage the commissioners to accept the judge's conclusions and reject the arguments from special interest groups who have no stake in Arizona's economic health and who would prefer Arizona job creators have access to fewer energy choices, never mind that it would hit Arizona consumers in the wallet.

The professional activists ignore that the full spectrum of the Arizona economy depends on a diverse energy portfolio that includes natural gas, whether it's advanced manufacturing, where Southwest Gas infrastructure is helping to make the multi-billion-dollar investment by TSMC possible, or health care, where the state's leading healthcare institutions depend on natural gas for 24x7 energy, tourism and its world-class restaurants, where chefs depend on natural gas kitchen appliances, and agribusiness, where natural gas is used in greenhouse heating systems, powers farm equipment, and aids in the production of fertilizer.

These industries all create thousands of jobs and enhance the quality of life across the state, contributing to one of the nation's best performing economies. In fact, the latest edition of *Rich States Poor States*, the annual state-by-state assessment of economic environments, [ranks](#) Arizona 1st in the nation for economic performance and 3rd nationally for economic outlook.

But it's not something policymakers can take for granted. We've seen what harmful energy policies can do, dramatically undermining otherwise attractive tax and regulatory environments.

Demand-driven summer brownouts in California or a winter grid failure in Texas aren't just inconveniences; they sow doubt in the minds of employers who need round-the-clock uptime to meet their customers' needs and they cause customers' bills to spike. It's enough to give economic developers sleepless nights.

The Southwest Gas rate proposal before the Corporation Commission is a responsible one. It helps ensure a modern and safe natural gas distribution system that not only will keep customers' rates affordable, but that will also encourage further economic growth for Arizona and will meet the demands of a growing state. Commissioners should accept the judge's

findings and continue the reliable and affordable delivery of a sought-after energy source to keep Arizona businesses humming.

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